

**Historic Scotland  
Properties in Care  
Minor Archaeological Works 2007**

**St. Vigean's Museum:  
Archaeological monitoring,  
November 2007**

**HS PIC Index number: 90272  
Project code: HSCO-90272-2007-01**



**21 March 2008  
Kirkdale Archaeology**

|                                   |                           |
|-----------------------------------|---------------------------|
| <b><u>Site</u></b>                | St Vigean's Museum        |
| <b><u>N.G.R</u></b>               | NO 639 429                |
| <b><u>Project Description</u></b> | Archaeological monitoring |
| <b><u>Project code</u></b>        | HSCO-90272-2007-01        |

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## 1.0 SUMMARY

*A watching brief was maintained at St. Vigean's Museum during the excavation of 18 postholes for a new boundary fence and the removal of an earth bank at the rear of the property. Nothing of archaeological significance was revealed in any of the postholes. Rich dark brown garden soil was revealed to a depth of 600mm in each of the postholes and the earth bank was composed of a similar rich dark soil indicating that the site may have been levelled and landscaped following the destruction of a nearby cottage in a fire in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, using soil from the market garden that once existed in the vicinity. The earth bank also contained building debris from the demolished cottage including large, dressed sandstone blocks. All the stone was checked for evidence of Pictish carving but none was found.*

## 2.0 INTRODUCTION

Under the terms of its call-off contract with Historic Scotland, Kirkdale Archaeology was asked to undertake a short period of archaeological monitoring at St. Vigean's Museum during the excavation of a series of postholes for a boundary fence around the newly purchased land at the back of the museum. Archaeological monitoring was also necessary during the removal of a bank of earth and vegetation from the new land in preparation for future excavation on the site to install a septic tank; this was to ensure that no fragments of Pictish symbol stone were concealed within the bank as several examples were found in the vicinity during the re-building of the church in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. The excavation of the postholes was carried out by a fencing contractor and the excavation of the earth bank was carried out by MCU staff. The work took place over eight days between 20/11/07-30/11/07.

## 3.0 DESCRIPTION

### 3.1 Postholes 1-18: 300mm diameter by 600mm deep along 31.00m line.

Work commenced with the excavation of 18 postholes, aligned roughly SW-NE along the 31.00m line of the new boundary fence at the rear of the property. Each hole was excavated using an auger, to a depth of 600mm, leaving a circular hole with a diameter of 300mm. In every case postholes 1-18 contained only one context

beneath turf and topsoil **001**; a very dark brown rich soil **002** with no inclusions and no finds, continuing to the base of each hole and not fully excavated.

### **3.2 Earth Bank: 31.00m long by 3.00m-5.00m wide by up to 1.00m high.**

Work commenced with the removal of a 'corridor' through the SW end of the earth bank, using a mini-digger with a toothed ditching bucket, to provide access across the site. This created a cross section through the bank revealing two contexts beneath vegetation **001**. The bank itself was entirely composed of dark brown rich earth **002** with occasional finds of white patterned china, window glass, animal bone, roof slates, bricks, and dressed blocks of red sandstone with mortar. Beneath this, seen only in the very SW corner of the site was a powdery dry, compact, light brown surface **003**. Once the SW corner of the site was cleared, the excavation moved Northeastwards revealing only **002** beneath **001** to the NE edge of the site. All fragments and blocks of stone found within **002** were retrieved, cleaned and examined for carving and cuts. Following the removal of the earth bank the greater part of the area enclosed by the new boundary fence, was levelled off.

### **4.0 INTERPRETATION AND OBSERVATIONS**

Up until the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, there was a cottage to the North of St Vigean's museum. The cottage was destroyed by fire in the late 20<sup>th</sup> Century, the remains of the building were demolished, and a new bungalow was built on the land. The debris from the cottage including dressed sandstone blocks, roof slates, bricks and window glass discovered in the earth bank suggest that this is the result of landscaping following the fire. The high quality soil most likely came from a market garden in the vicinity, the depth of the soil in postholes 1-18 again suggesting that the area was landscaped following the fire. None of the sandstone blocks from the earth bank showed evidence of Pictish carving. This is not surprising for although several carved stones are built into the fabric of the church, none are visible in the cottages around the village which were likely contemporary with the fire destroyed cottage judging by the style of the building material recovered from the mound such as the dressed red sandstone blocks and large bevelled edge roof slates and the bricks from the chimney.

There may be archaeological horizons preserved beneath the landscaping if the ground level has been raised slightly with imported soil. If there is any archaeology preserved below the site it may be discovered during phase 2 of the work during the excavation of the hole for the septic tank, which may be up to 2.00m deep.

## **A1.0 APPENDIX 1: LIST OF CONTEXTS**

### **Postholes 1-18**

| <b>No</b> | <b>Description</b>                          |
|-----------|---|
| 001       | Turf and dark brown top soil.               |
| 002       | Dark brown garden soil to a depth of 650mm. |

### **Earth Bank**

| <b>No</b> | <b>Description</b>  |
|-----------|---|
| 101       | Plant litter covering the earth bank.   |
| 102       | Dark brown garden soil used to construct the earth bank.  |
| 103       | Light brown powder dry but compact surface seen under <b>102</b> at the SW corner of the earth bank at previous ground level. |
| 104       | Stone kerb of dressed sandstone blocks, containing the SW corner of the earth bank.   |

## **A2.0 APPENDIX 2: LIST OF DRAWINGS**

| <b>No</b> | <b>Type</b> | <b>Description</b>  | <b>Scale</b> |
|-----------|-------------|---|--------------|
| 1         | Plan        | Plan showing position of postholes 1-18 and area of ground levelled during the removal of the earth bank. | 1:100        |
| 2         | Section     | Partial section showing generalised depth and width of postholes 1-18                                     | 1:20         |

## **A3.0 APPENDIX 3: LIST OF PHOTOGRAPHS**

| <b>DCSN</b> | <b>Description</b>   | <b>From</b> | <b>Date</b> |
|-------------|--|-------------|-------------|
| 2902        | General shot showing the earth start of the excavation through the W side of the earth bank. | SE          | 20/11/07    |
| 2903        | General shot showing the earth start of the excavation through the W side of the earth bank. | SE          | 20/11/07    |

| DCSN | Description  | From | Date     |
|------|--|------|----------|
| 2904 | General shot showing the earth start of the excavation through the W side of the earth bank. | ESE  | 20/11/07 |
| 2905 | Patch of brick and concrete in 002.  | -    | 20/11/07 |
| 2906 | Patch of brick and concrete in 002.  | SE   | 20/11/07 |
| 2908 | View along the line of the new fence before excavation of the postholes.                     | SW   | 20/11/07 |
| 2909 | View along the line of the new fence before excavation of the postholes.                     | NE   | 20/11/07 |
| 2910 | General shot showing a side on view of the earth bank.                                       | NW   | 20/11/07 |
| 2911 | The auger.   | N    | 20/11/07 |
| 2912 | Site of posthole 1.  | SE   | 20/11/07 |
| 2913 | View along the top of the earth bank.  | SW   | 20/11/07 |
| 2914 | General view along the earth bank.   | SW   | 20/11/07 |
| 2915 | View along the line of the new fence before excavation of the postholes.                     | SW   | 20/11/07 |
| 2916 | Excavation of posthole 18.   | W    | 20/11/07 |
| 2918 | The Auger.   | N    | 20/11/07 |
| 2919 | Posthole 1.  | NE   | 20/11/07 |
| 2921 | Posthole 1.  | NE   | 20/11/07 |
| 2924 | Excavation of posthole 2.  | SSW  | 20/11/07 |
| 2926 | Posthole 2.  | SSW  | 20/11/07 |
| 2928 | Posthole 2.  | SSW  | 20/11/07 |
| 2929 | Excavation of posthole 3.  | SW   | 20/11/07 |
| 2030 | Posthole 3.  | W    | 20/11/07 |
| 2931 | Posthole 3.  | W    | 20/11/07 |
| 2932 | Excavation of posthole 4.  | W    | 20/11/07 |
| 2933 | Posthole 4.  | W    | 20/11/07 |
| 2934 | Posthole 4.  | W    | 20/11/07 |
| 2935 | Excavation of posthole 5.  | SW   | 20/11/07 |
| 2936 | Posthole 5.  | SW   | 20/11/07 |
| 2937 | Posthole 5.  | SW   | 20/11/07 |
| 2938 | Excavation of posthole 6.  | WSW  | 20/11/07 |
| 2939 | Posthole 6.  | WSW  | 20/11/07 |
| 2940 | Posthole 6.  | WSW  | 20/11/07 |
| 2942 | Excavation of posthole 7.  | SW   | 20/11/07 |

| DCSN | Description   | From | Date     |
|------|---|------|----------|
| 2943 | Posthole 7.   | WSW  | 20/11/07 |
| 2944 | Posthole 7.   | WSW  | 20/11/07 |
| 2945 | Excavation of posthole 8.   | NE   | 20/11/07 |
| 2946 | Posthole 8.   | W    | 20/11/07 |
| 2947 | Posthole 8.   | W    | 20/11/07 |
| 2948 | Excavation of posthole 9.   | SW   | 20/11/07 |
| 2949 | Posthole 9.   | SW   | 20/11/07 |
| 2950 | Posthole 9.   | SW   | 20/11/07 |
| 2952 | Posthole 10.  | SW   | 20/11/07 |
| 2953 | Posthole 10.  | SW   | 20/11/07 |
| 2955 | Posthole 11.  | SW   | 20/11/07 |
| 2956 | Posthole 11.  | SW   | 20/11/07 |
| 2957 | Posthole 11.  | -    | 20/11/07 |
| 2958 | Posthole 12.  | W    | 20/11/07 |
| 2959 | Posthole 12.  | W    | 20/11/07 |
| 2960 | Posthole 13.  | W    | 20/11/07 |
| 2961 | Posthole 13.  | W    | 20/11/07 |
| 2964 | Posthole 14.  | SW   | 20/11/07 |
| 2965 | Posthole 14.  | SW   | 20/11/07 |
| 2967 | Posthole 15.  | SW   | 20/11/07 |
| 2968 | Posthole 15.  | SW   | 20/11/07 |
| 2969 | Posthole 16.  | W    | 20/11/07 |
| 2970 | Posthole 16.  | W    | 20/11/07 |
| 2972 | Posthole 17.  | W    | 20/11/07 |
| 2973 | Posthole 17.  | W    | 20/11/07 |
| 2974 | Posthole 18.  | S    | 20/11/07 |
| 2975 | Posthole 18.  | S    | 20/11/07 |
| 2977 | View along the line of excavated postholes.   | NE   | 20/11/07 |
| 2978 | General shot showing concrete post insertion.   | SE   | 20/11/07 |
| 2980 | General shot showing continuing excavation of the earth bank.                               | SE   | 20/11/07 |
| 2981 | General shot showing continuing excavation of the earth bank.                               | SE   | 20/11/07 |
| 2982 | General shot showing continuing excavation of the earth bank and lighter brown deposit 003. | NE   | 20/11/07 |
| 2983 | General shot showing continuing excavation of the   | NNE  | 20/11/07 |



| DCSN | Description   | From | Date     |
|------|---|------|----------|
|      | earth bank and lighter brown deposit 003.   |      |          |
| 2984 | Roof slates in 002.   | -    | 20/11/07 |
| 2985 | Roof slates in 002.   | -    | 20/11/07 |
| 2986 | General shot showing continuing excavation of the earth bank and lighter brown deposit 003. | ESE  | 20/11/07 |
| 2987 | General shot showing continuing excavation of the earth bank and lighter brown deposit 003. | ESE  | 20/11/07 |
| 2989 | View of stone kerb 004 retaining the SE edge of the bank.                                   | S    | 21/11/07 |
| 2993 | Example of sandstone block from demolished cottage found in 002.                            | -    | 22/11/07 |
| 2995 | Example of sandstone block from demolished cottage found in 002.                            | -    | 22/11/07 |
| 2999 | General shot showing SW end of site.  | NE   | 22/11/07 |
| 3000 | General shot showing SW end of site.  | SE   | 22/11/07 |
| 3001 | Light brown deposit 003. Old ground surface at the SW corner of the site.                   | SW   | 22/11/07 |
| 3002 | General shot during excavation.   | SW   | 22/11/07 |
| 3003 | General shot during excavation.   | SW   | 22/11/07 |
| 3004 | General shot during excavation.   | SW   | 26/11/07 |
| 3005 | Shot showing a section through the earth bank, showing 001 and 002.                         | SW   | 26/11/07 |
| 3006 | Shot showing a section through the earth bank, showing 001 and 002.                         | SW   | 26/11/07 |
| 3009 | General shot during excavation.   | SW   | 27/11/07 |
| 3010 | General shot during excavation.   | SW   | 27/11/07 |
| 3011 | General shot during excavation showing scraped section of top of bank.                      | SW   | 27/11/07 |
| 3012 | General shot during excavation.   | SW   | 28/11/07 |
| 3013 | Shot showing a section through the earth bank, showing 001 and 002.                         | SW   | 28/11/07 |
| 3014 | Shot showing a section through the earth bank, showing 001 and 002.                         | SW   | 28/11/07 |
| 3015 | Shot showing a section through the earth bank, showing 001 and 002.                         | SW   | 28/11/07 |
| 3016 | Shot showing a section through the earth bank,  | SW   | 28/11/07 |

| DCSN | Description  | From | Date     |
|------|--|------|----------|
|      | showing 001 and 002.   |      |          |
| 3017 | General shot during excavation.  | NW   | 28/11/07 |
| 3018 | General shot during excavation.  | SW   | 28/11/07 |
| 3019 | Excavation near completion.  | NE   | 28/11/07 |
| 3020 | Excavation near completion.  | SW   | 30/11/07 |
| 2021 | Excavation near completion.  | SW   | 30/11/07 |
| 3023 | General shot showing the building material used in all the cottages in the village; bricks, slate and sandstone. | -    | 30/11/07 |
| 3024 | Excavation complete.   | SW   | 30/11/07 |

#### A4.0 APPENDIX 4: LIST OF FINDS

| Box No. | Bag No.  | Material  | Quantity | Context No. |
|---------|----------|---|----------|-------------|
| 1225    | 1225-001 | Metal pipe and metal pump                       | 2        | 002         |
| 1225    | 1225-002 | Ceramic pipe                                    | 3        | 002         |
| 1225    | 1225-003 | Brown/cream glazed pottery                      | 2        | 002         |
| 1225    | 1225-004 | Patterned wall tile and brown glazed floor tile | 2        | 002         |
| 1225    | 1225-005 | Bottle glass                                    | 2        | 002         |
| 1225    | 1225-006 | White patterned china                           | 13       | 002         |
| 1225    | 1225-007 | Brick   | 1        | 002         |
| 1225    | 1225-008 | Modern window glass                             | 4        | 002         |

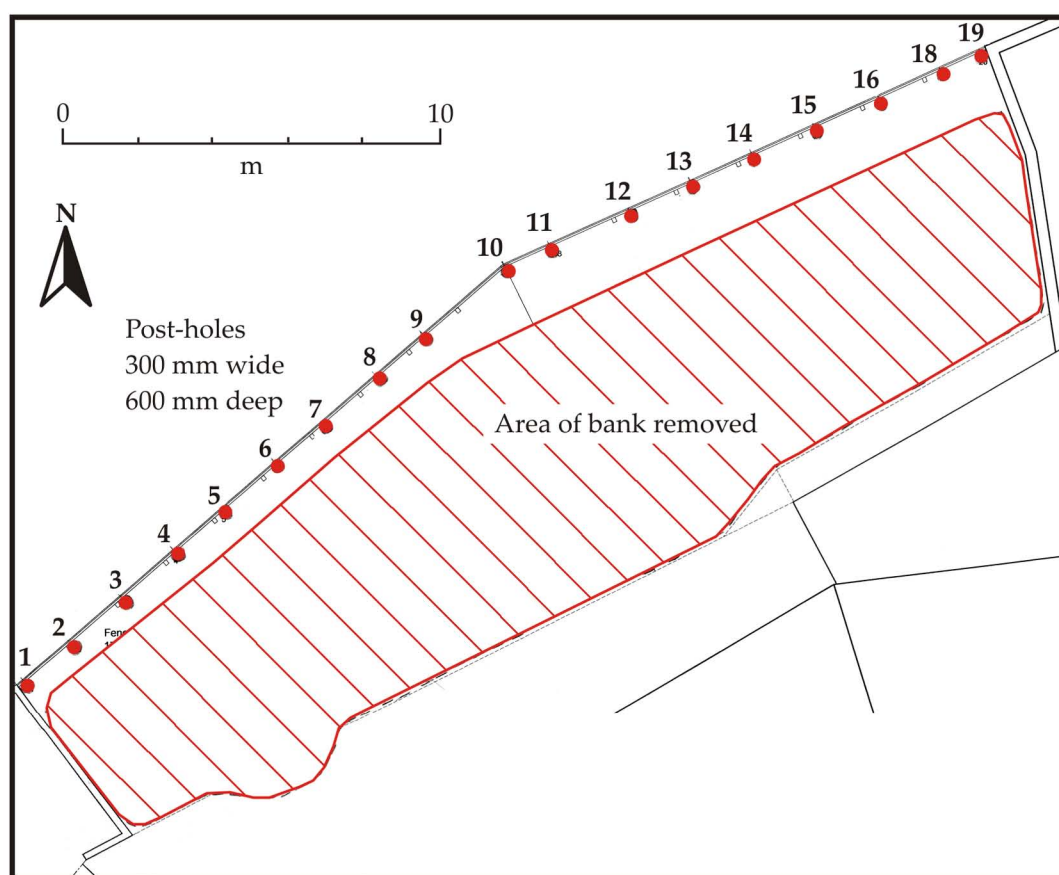
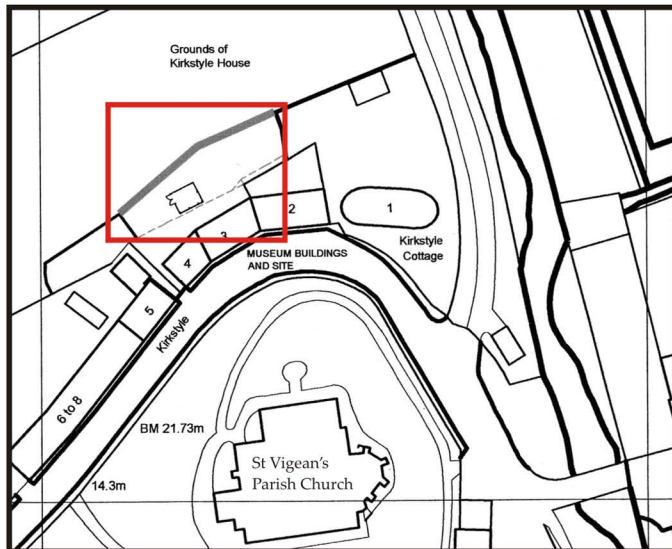


Fig. 1 : Plan (1:200) showing location of excavations